

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A support member for a semipermeable membrane, characterized in that said support member comprises a nonwoven fabric having a mean value of the breaking lengths at elongation of 5 % in lengthwise direction (MD) and crosswise direction (CD) of 4.0 km or more and an air permeability of 0.2-10.0 cc/cm²·s.

2. The support member for a semipermeable membrane according to claim 1, wherein said support member comprises the nonwoven fabric mainly composed of polyester fiber having a double refraction (Δn) of 0.170 or more and a heat shrinkage stress (200°C) of 0.10-0.60 g/d.

3. The support member for a semipermeable membrane according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said support member comprises the nonwoven fabric mainly composed of the polyester fiber having a double refraction (Δn) of 0.170 or more, a heat shrinkage stress (200°C) of 0.10-0.60 g/d and a mean fineness of single fiber of 1.0-8.0 denier, and a content of the polyester fiber is 30-70 % by weight.

4. The support member for a semipermeable membrane according to ^{claim 1} ~~any of claims 1-3~~, wherein the polyester fiber is poly(alkylene arylate) mainly composed of diol unit selected from ethylene glycol unit and/or 1,4-butanediol unit and dicarboxylic acid unit selected from terephthalic acid unit and/or naphthalenedicarboxylic acid unit.

5. A process for preparing a support member for a semipermeable membrane which comprises (i) forming a

monolayered paper web by making a paper from the material comprising the polyester fiber having a double refraction (Δn) of 0.170 or more and a heat shrinkage stress (200°C) of 0.10-0.60 g/d and a heat weldable binder fiber in a weight ratio of 70:30-30:70, and (ii) subjecting the monolayered paper web or a laminated web comprising at least the monolayered paper web to a heat treatment under pressure to bind the fibers each other or (iii) subjecting the monolayered paper web to a heat treatment under pressure to bind the fibers each other, and laminating the monolayered paper web or other fibrous web on the heat-treated monolayered paper web and then subjecting the laminated webs to a heat treatment under pressure to bind them in a body.

6. The process for preparing a support member for a semipermeable membrane according to claim 5, wherein the heat weldable binder fiber is a polyester fiber.

7. A semipermeable membrane having a support member wherein a semipermeable film is formed on one side of the support member for a semipermeable membrane according to

~~any of claims 1-4.~~
claim 7

8. A nonwoven fabric having a mean value of the breaking lengths at elongation of 5 % in lengthwise direction (MD) and crosswise direction (CD) of 4.0 km or more and an air permeability of 0.2-10.0 cc/cm²·s.

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